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SUBJECT: CAUTIOUS FRENCH INTEREST IN PARTNERSHIP FOR BETTER  
GOVERNANCE

PARIS 00004650 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Policy Planning (S/P) Director Dr. Stephen Krasner met with French officials and MFA consultants June 23-24 to discuss the nascent initiative for a "Partnership for Better Governance Group" (PBGG). Krasner explained the PBGG would be a multilateral effort with interested developing states to facilitate the provision of specific state functions, for instance in health care, education, justice, etc. It would not be a one-size-fits-all template; programs would be tailored to the needs of recipient countries in specific areas. French interlocutors welcomed the core strategic goals, stressed the need for the UN to play a foundational role, but posed questions about possible redundancy with the UN Peacebuilding Commission. The IO/UN Adviser to the French Presidency cautioned against the likelihood of misperceptions of the PBGG, absent a UN lead, as a vehicle for a "hidden agenda" of U.S. transformational diplomacy. Dr. Krasner indicated a willingness to consider UNDP ownership of the PBGG. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Pierre Levy, Director of the "Centre d'Analyse et Prevision" (CAP), the MFA S/P counterpart, hosted a luncheon discussion on June 23 with MFA consultants Professors Bassma Kodmani-Darwish (College de France, proponent of the "Arab Reform Initiative"), Ghassan Salame (Institute for Political Sciences, former Lebanese Cultural Minister), and Africa specialist Professor Richard Banegas (University of Paris-I). Levy indicated interest in clarification of the mechanics of PBGG administration and its relationship with the UN and other extant assistance initiatives.

¶3. (SBU) Professor Kodmani-Darwish asked how PBGG fit into the broader agenda of democracy promotion, particularly in the Middle East. Jordan, she mused, might be willing to engage with the PBGG, unlike Egypt, which would want to maintain its "jobs program" bureaucracy. Dr. Krasner underscored that PBGG assistance, unlike previous technical assistance programs, would be time-limited and would require accountability measurements. Kodmani-Darwish advocated expansion of civil society agents to provide feedback on state performance and accountability.

¶4. (SBU) Professor Banegas observed there was general resistance in African states to efforts to promote checks and balances in governance, because these are seen as empowering the opposition. He noted the value in articulating standard indicators by which to measure the success of good governance programs. Former Lebanese Culture Minister Salame opined that the PBGG should be advanced discreetly and with an

enhanced multilateral signature. He admitted there were already examples of PBGG-type activities, with Liberia and Lebanon both relying on the UN to lead judicial investigations that were beyond the means of those governments. Such cases of voluntary cession of sovereignty, however, were exceptional, he thought.

15. (SBU) Dr. Krasner met on June 24 with Laurent Vigier, Multilateral Affairs adviser to the French Presidency. Like Pierre Levy, whom he stated he had not consulted, Vigier emphasized the need to reinforce the UN. Absent a UN lead, he predicted there would be grave misperceptions about the nature of the PBGG as a vehicle for a "hidden agenda" of U.S. transformational diplomacy. Dr. Krasner said UNDP ownership of the PBGG was one possibility.

#### Development Interlocutors Seek Added Partners

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16. (SBU) At the French Development Agency (AFD) Dr. Krasner met with Pierre Jacquet Executive Director (Strategy) and Chief Economist, and Jean-Marc Chataigner, Director of Strategic Planning and Partnerships. While agreeing with much of Krasner's general diagnosis of the problems of delivering technical assistance, Jacquet suggested considering changes in the proposed governance structure for the partnership. In particular he said including NGOs and Foundations could be very interesting, and would help defuse criticism of the proposal on political grounds. He also suggested linking the partnership to current discussion of Public/Private Partnerships. Chataigner suggested that some topics would merit the involvement of regional actors, such as the Economic Community of West African States, which had been active in customs collection and the fight against the illegal diamond trade.

17. (SBU) At the MFA's Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DGCID) Krasner discussed his

PARIS 00004650 002 OF 002

proposal with Jerome Pasquier, DGCID Deputy Director and Herve Magro, Deputy Director of DGCID's Democratic Governance Office. Magro began by noting that the French approach to these issues had been shaped by criticism of "assistance programs" like France's once-widespread technical cooperation with former colonies that had fallen off for financial and political reasons beginning in the 1990's. As a result, DGCID was now thinking about how cultural change and social dialogue could be used to create a sense of broad local ownership and to foster sustainability of development programs. In particular, they believed they needed to move beyond the elites that had historically been the principal beneficiaries of French efforts. Pasquier added that local legitimacy would be the key to making the Partnership work: politicians would otherwise be tempted to avoid responsibility and to blame outside contractors for any failures the Partnership encountered. Perhaps use of existing institutions to house the Partnership could help provide such legitimacy. Along these lines, Magro wondered how the proposal fit into the Community of Democracies and the UN Peacebuilding Commission. In addition, he strongly recommended that beneficiaries -- especially African countries -- be consulted for their views.

18. (SBU) Embassy Comment: French interlocutors indicated interest in the PBGG and welcomed how it might improve the effectiveness of state institutions in developing countries, in particular in delivering core social services such as health care and education. Interest however was tempered by concern that the PBGG should not be a competitor to the UN system and its actors.

19. (U) S/P delegation cleared this cable.

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